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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: BUSH'S ASIA TRIP

¶1. Summary: The front-page headline story for almost all major Chinese-language Taiwan dailies November 22 was the indictment of 18 Taiwan officials, businessmen and 4 Thai laborers in the Kaohsiung Rapid Transit Corp scandal, among who, most notably, is former Presidential Office Deputy Secretary-General Chen Che-nan. Newspaper coverage also

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focused on other scandals, campaigns for the upcoming 3-in-1 elections, Taiwan's tuna quota cut for 2006, and the aftermath of U.S. President George W. Bush's summit with Chinese President Hu Jintao. Most newspapers carried in their inside pages Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council Chairman Joseph Wu's comment in the Legislative Yuan Monday that Taiwan can breathe a sigh of relief now that the U.S. policy on cross-Strait relations has not changed after the Bush-Hu summit. The centrist "China Times" ran a news article that quoted an unnamed high-ranking Taiwan official as saying the United States will stage a joint military exercise in Mongolia in June 2006 to rival China's "Shanghai Cooperation Organization," adding that Taiwan is seeking to participate in the exercise, too.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, Tamkang University's Graduate Institute for American Studies Professor Chen Yi-hsin said in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" that Bush's trip to Asia has led many Asian countries to sense that China has not only risen in stature but is also taking advantage of this current opportunity whereas Washington has to focus its foreign policy in the Middle East to significantly expand its sphere of influence in that region. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" discussed the Bush-Hu summit, saying that Washington and Beijing appear in sync on how to handle Taiwan, and the island should think hard about its place in the new world order. End summary.

A) "How Will the United States Restore Its Prestige in Asia"

Chen Yi-hsin, professor at Tamkang University's Graduate Institute for American Studies, commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (11/22):

"President George W. Bush's trip to Asia may have led many Asian countries to sense that China has not only risen [in stature] but is also taking advantage of this current opportunity whereas Washington has to focus its foreign policy in the Middle East to significantly expand its sphere of influence [in that region]. If Washington does not change its policy now, Asia might gradually drift away from the United States. The United States has attached too much importance on the Middle East, whereas the outcome [of its diplomatic efforts] may not be seen immediately. In the meantime, however, there is a temporary vacuum in Asia's power structure. China joined Russia in demanding at the annual conference of the Six Nations Cooperation Organization that the United States withdraw from the military bases in Central Asia. China will also play a leading role in the East Asia Summit, which will take place in December, from which the superpower United States will be excluded. . .

"For mainland China, Bush's praise of Taiwan's democracy in Kyoto seemed on the surface as a move to persuade China to emulate Taiwan's democracy and freedom. But in reality, . it seems evident that the United States has gradually come to realize that Beijing, following the enactment of its Anti-Secession Law, is about to replace Washington [in its level of influence] with regard to cross-Strait issues. Bush's playing the card of Taiwan's democracy this time was thus an attempt to seize back its leadership regarding cross-Strait issues. ."

B) "U.S., China in Sync on ROC"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (11/22):

"For the first time in decades, Taiwan was not a problem issue in U.S.-China summit talks, but an appendix. This is good-bad news for Taiwan. Good, it signals the cross-strait

status quo will be upheld without disruptions. Bad, Taiwan is increasingly losing control of its future to the two powers. .

"In Washington, there's a realization that while the U.S. can wage wars unilaterally, it can't achieve peace that way. This is especially true after 9-11. China, though still a communist dictatorship and a potential challenger, is no longer called a strategic competitor but an indispensable partner and a 'stakeholder' in managing world issues. U.S. influence on China in economics, political development and human rights is limited. China has to be accepted for what it is. .

"Bush's Asia tour is widely seen as part of a campaign to rejuvenate U.S. leadership for a new world order. In addition to engaging China, Washington is also expected to forge a partnership with Russia, accept India's nuclear status, welcome a more assertive Japan, and encourage a more capable and active Europe. All are firm believers in the one-China principle. Taiwan will be further sidelined. The U.S. and China appear in sync on how to handle Taiwan, the island should think hard about its place in this new world order."

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